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THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH PLATONIC EPISTLES.

THE recent paper of J. Harward (*Classical Quarterly*, XXII., pp. 143-154) on the seventh and eighth Platonic Epistles deserves an answer. He suggests that Plato's statement at the beginning of the seventh Epistle, that he had received a communication from the friends of Dion, is a literary fiction. Supposing then that this suggestion is correct, he maintains the view that Plato, having no knowledge of the death of Dion's son before his father's assassination in 354 B.C., refers to him as Hipparinus without qualification in the seventh Epistle (324a), and as Dion's son, giving no name, in the eighth Epistle (355e).

Now I do not believe that the message from Dion's friends was a literary fiction. The mention of Hipparinus and the reference (334b) to a current charge that Athens was disgraced by the conduct of Callippus and his brother are most easily explained by supposing that they were suggested by something in an address to Plato by Dion's friends. The charge at least that Athens was disgraced because of Callippus' conduct certainly emanated from Sicily, not from Athens—nor from Callippus either—and the defence against it was written primarily for a Sicilian audience. Plato was of course writing throughout the seventh Epistle for anyone who was interested anywhere, but it is clear that, where his message has any bearing on practical politics, its aim is to meet the accusation that Plato and Dion were unsympathetic to the Syracusan ideal of liberty, as well as to strengthen the party of Dion by announcing for them a programme that would attract adherents.

The suggestion that Plato would not have condemned Sicilian luxury in writing for Sicilians seems to me quite topsy-turvy. Plato's missionary fervour was somewhat akin to that of Paul of Tarsus, and it is reasonable to suppose that he, like Paul, would have dealt in any letter with the particular vices of those to whom he was writing. If Plato had been more concerned to please those to whom he spoke (or wrote), he would not have been in danger of losing his life on each of the three occasions when he visited the Syracusan court. I believe that Plato felt bound to explain his relations with Dionysius chiefly for the benefit of partisans in Syracuse who had misinterpreted his activity. Still, it is worth noting that he was also to some extent in the position of a publicist or politician in modern times who feels it incumbent on him to express his views on the situation in behalf of his ideals and of his party whenever there is an important change in the aspect of affairs. It is not in the least surprising that Plato should have published more than one letter dealing with the Syracusan situation. Modern publicists easily manage more than that on the position in India or in China.

Neither is it necessary to suppose that the seventh Epistle is a purely literary document in order to explain its eccentricities. I do not believe that Plato wrote purely literary documents at all. The *Laws* certainly were written, at least in part, with a definite missionary purpose—that of impelling and guiding Dionysius towards a philosophic goal. The arrangement of the seventh Epistle is adequately explained if we suppose that Plato was engaged in writing it when the death of Dion was reported to him. Surely when he refers (326e) to his own responsibility for τῶν νῦν γεγονότων πραγμάτων περὶ Δίωνα καὶ περὶ Συρακούσας, he is not thinking of Dion's death or of his execution of Heracleides. He is writing at an earlier period before Dion's triumph had turned to disaster. The two passages in the autobiographical parts of the seventh Epistle which refer to a later period (326e and 327d) may well have been inserted afterwards.

These views are, however, perhaps a matter of personal interpretation. Mr. Harward's discussion is of necessity very largely a balancing of probabilities, and any answer to it must be similar. It is important notwithstanding not to include impossibilities or even gross improbabilities in any reconstruction of the story. There is one essential link in Mr. Harward's account that is really impossible—the supposition that Plato remained ignorant of the death of Dion's son. Even though no news had been brought to Athens except by Callippus' ship, still anyone interested could have learned of the death of Dion's son from any sailor on that ship. That death had been advertised in Syracuse precisely by Callippus himself along with a report that Dion intended to adopt Apollocrates, son of Dionysius the Younger (Plutarch, *Dion* 56). The death of Dion's son was politically important, and Callippus had an interest in announcing it. The news of it must have been accessible to anyone as interested as Plato was.

Again, it is quite unsound to suppose that Callippus could prevent Plato's friends at Syracuse from communicating with him. Dionysius had, to be sure, prevented Plato from leaving Syracuse, but Callippus' position was by no means so absolute at first. He did not become tyrant without opposition and he did not in fact prevent Dion's friends from withdrawing to Leontini. Certainly he could not have prevented them from sending letters from that place, especially after Hipparinus had come to their aid. Furthermore, it is precisely in times of disorder that letters are surest to be sent, for at such times there is much to discuss. Even to suppose that letters could not have been sent from Syracuse itself under Callippus is going too far, for Plato, in spite of the watch kept on him by Dionysius, managed to smuggle out a message to Archytas to Tarentum (Epistle 7, 350a).

Consideration of this point is enough in itself to upset Mr. Harward's argument. There are other points, however, which are worth noting. Mr. Harward argues that the Hipparinus of the seventh Epistle (324a) is Dion's son. I agree that if we had only the seventh Epistle, we might suppose that Dion and Hipparinus were father and son. But we have the eighth Epistle, and there Dion's son is not called Hipparinus, and the Hipparinus who is mentioned is not Dion's son. Certainly Plato must have known when he wrote the seventh Epistle that Dion's son was dead, for otherwise he would have specified which Hipparinus he meant. Dion's son was not in any case eighteen years old in 354; he was some years younger. Plutarch refers to him first as τὸ παῖδιον (*Dion* 51), then as being σχεδὸν ἀντίπαις (*Dion* 55). As a παῖδιον he was fourteen or less. As ἀντίπαις he would have been between fourteen and eighteen, for that term includes the period when one has ceased to be a παῖδιον and is not yet an ἐφηβος. Plutarch uses the expression ἀντίπαις (*Pompey* 76, 5) of Ptolemy Dionysius who according to Perrin's note in the Loeb edition, was fifteen years old at the time. Dion's son was accordingly in 354 a boy, but almost an ἀντίπαις, that is he was some fourteen years old—a long way from the twenty years required if he is to be the Hipparinus of the seventh Epistle. I placed his birth too early in the tables of descent in my *Thirteen Epistles of Plato* (Oxford, 1925).

There is another correction to be made in the same tables. Sophrosyne, not Arete, should be assigned 390 as her birth-year. There are two reasons for thinking Sophrosyne the elder of the two sisters; she is named first by Plutarch (*Dion* 6), and she was married to Dionysius the Younger, an honour that would naturally fall to the elder sister. She had a son Apollocrates who was old enough to be nominally in command of the citadel at Syracuse after Dionysius' departure in 356. If he was eighteen years old, she must have been born in 390 or earlier. Since Dionysius the Elder married Aristomache and Doris in 398, the former would have been at most but eight years childless, but this is perhaps enough to justify Plutarch's statement that she was a long time childless. Dionysius the Younger was not necessarily the

firstborn of Doris, though he was the eldest son who survived to grow up. Since Arete was a widow when she married Dion, and since their son was nearly fifteen in 354, she must have been born in 385 or earlier. In regard to the age of their brother Hipparinus, I agree with Mr. Harward that we need not suppose that the Hipparinus of the seventh Epistle was exactly twenty years old in 354. Since, however, the natural tendency is to think of absent friends as younger than they really are, because they are younger as remembered, it is likely that the Hipparinus there referred to was more, not less, than twenty years old. Be that as it may, even if Hipparinus was born in 374, there is no such difficulty as Mr. Harward supposes. It would indeed be an improbable, though not an impossible, supposition if we were to assume that Aristomache bore first two daughters, then no offspring for ten or more years, and finally became the mother of two sons when she was about forty years old. But this is not necessary; we need only suppose that for a period of ten years such children as were born to Aristomache died in infancy, and this is not in the least an improbable supposition, for we may be sure that infant mortality was extremely common in ancient times.

I still believe that Dion's son in the eighth Epistle could hardly be spoken of as he is if he were other than a nameless infant. Mr. Harward has not discussed that point. In any case, since Plato evidently knew of the death of Dion's elder son, he must be referring here to the posthumous infant whose birth in a Syracusan prison became known only after the capture of Syracuse by Hipparinus. Consequently the eighth Epistle was written after that event; and when Plato says that Hipparinus is freeing the Syracusans, he means that Hipparinus has taken the first steps towards establishing constitutional government. This is a legitimate interpretation of *ἐλευθεροῖ* (356a), and any other is excluded by the considerations mentioned. Furthermore, Plato's language at this point shows that he has in mind, not the freeing of a city by force of arms, but the act of setting it free by constitutional enactment. Plato says that Hipparinus by his voluntary act is acquiring everlasting honour for himself and his race instead of an ephemeral and unjust tyranny. Compare the language of 354c. It is clear that the act referred to is one that would not have been in Hipparinus' power, and consequently could not have been referred to as voluntary, unless he was actually in control at Syracuse. It is not surprising in view of this passage that the eighth Epistle has been almost universally assigned to a date shortly after Hipparinus' conquest of Syracuse. Callippus was of some importance even after his loss of Syracuse, so that the reference to him (352c) proves nothing.

Finally, with regard to the question whether the *Antidosis* of Isocrates was published earlier or later than the seventh Epistle, there is some evidence that has not been noted. Isocrates in the *Antidosis* (79-83) belittles the activity of the compiler of laws, presumably with reference to the *Laws* of Plato. So when Plato says in the seventh Epistle (344c) that no written work, whether in the form of laws or in any other form, can be the most serious work of a serious man, he is probably making light of Isocrates' thrust. This is no more than a slight indication of the priority of the *Antidosis*; still it adds some weight to my previous arguments.

In attempting to be brief I have necessarily in this article failed to mention many points on which I am in agreement with Mr. Harward. His date for the death of Dion (354) is an improvement on mine (353). This change, however, makes Dion twenty-one years old, rather than twenty, in 388, and the Hipparinus of the seventh Epistle, having the same age, is further than ever from the fourteen years of Dion's son.

L. A. Post.